

# **Valles Caldera Trust Draft Framework Rollout Public Meetings**

**Northern NM Community College, Española  
April 23, 2004**

## **NOTES**

The third VCT public meeting for the Draft Framework Document was held at Northern New Mexico Community College on the rainy evening of April 23. The meeting was attended by 10 members of the public, along with several Board members and staff. Toby Herzlich facilitated the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- present and gather feedback on the Draft Framework document
- engage in dialogue between the Valles Caldera Trust and the public
- outline the process and timeline for finalizing the Framework and moving to the next planning steps

Bill deBuys welcomed the group and introduced Board and staff members. Toby Herzlich presented the objectives and agenda for the meeting. Gary Ziehe presented a 20-minute slide show as a basis of understanding around the Trust's work to date and the Framework document. Following this introduction, general dialogue among the group surfaces several concerns and feedback ideas:

### **Participant Feedback on the Draft Framework and other Issues**

- Thank you – for the Draft Framework and for the public input opportunity. Appreciation for the conservative approach, monitoring, establishing a baseline before moving forward. Continue to resist the pressure to move too fast.
- Concern about maintaining forage on the Preserve and on its neighboring allotments. During drought, cattle numbers are reduced but elk continue to come onto the Preserve, and they migrate over the boundaries. Consider putting a game fence on the northern boundary to stop elk migrating off of the Preserve.
- The Framework has no mention of timber resource growth studies. Consider a demonstration project to look at intensive forest management in Northern New Mexico. The Preserve has huge possibilities for timber production and small scale economic development. Thinning and logging is needed to prevent wildfires.
- Provide for economic value to the surrounding area – enhance lumber, grazing, recreation, etc.
- Consider a cost-center accounting method, which attributes money to different programs. The challenge is to reflect the interdisciplinary nature of the VCNP – how to reflect the interaction of components?

- Concern about the financial self-sufficiency goal. Will the Trust be able to main its conservative approach when “the drum starts beating” toward meeting that goal?
- Current and future federal budget deficits require the Trust to make more progress toward financial self-sufficiency. The 15-year timeframe should be do-able.
- Selection of the new Executive Director is important – this person is the key to success.
- Find more opportunities for the public to have access to data. Use universities for research support.
- Improve public outreach. Work more through existing groups (e.g. the NM Stockman’s Association volunteers to get its members involved); use newsletters of established organizations; consider a regular column in the newspaper.
- People tend to come out to meetings when there is a crisis – in this case, shine the spotlight instead on the cooperative nature of the experiment. Invite and involve people to come together to resolve issues that are tough. Build positive assumptions about the VCNP, and avoid surprises later.
- Small scale ranchers are feeling “left out” of this year’s grazing program, which focuses on the Conservation Stewardship Plan. It is important that NNM families have the culture of cattle raising to pass onto their kids. Working with cows, even a few, provides kids with something to do and teaches them important values. It reinforces culture and builds community. There is an invisible value of small livestock operations that spin-off of social benefits. The VCT should maintain its grazing program to sustain this. Preference for cow-calf pairs instead of a heifer program.
- Thinning and logging
- In the Framework, or in immediate next documents, specific objectives need to be articulated. Be more specific in planning around roads, facilities, trails, landscape. Think about objectives for the Preserve as a whole, and articulate them as sideboards, the acceptable outside levels beyond which the VCT will not go (e.g., no more than x% increase in bare ground).
- Within the working ranch, maintain scientific opportunities by setting aside areas in which to measure the absence of grazing, logging, and other resource use.
- Get data into public hands early – before decisions are made. Publish more information about what has been done and is being done. Data is needed to avoid conflicts down the road.
- Figure out how to limit access instead of develop it. Avoid creating another Yellowstone, with crowds, big infrastructure, etc. Limit access onto the Preserve interior. Use the Valle Vidal as a management model.